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ABSTRACT

Educational Research Information Center (ERIC) Trends are analyses of higher education literature contained in the ERIC database describing major concerns in institutional practice. Student demographics/characteristic/profiles, retention, and funding for college were the three most prevalent issues in the literature about students. However, it remains unclear whether and to what degree institutions actually use this information. The amount of research on students has also declined from previous years. The research that was conducted tended to follow traditional themes such as retention, student adjustment, student satisfaction, student development, student access and recruitment, rather than examining new issues such as technology, transfer students, multiple enrollment, student success, or student outcomes. A few new themes have started to emerge in the literature though, including: (1) ethics and integrity; (2) alcohol use; (3) adult student and graduate student needs; (4) diversity and student access; and (5) student activism. Perhaps the emphasis on integrity is a response to the problems of cheating, alcoholism, and other unethical behaviors. As institutions confront these issues, they must also rethink the needs of students as the enrollment of adult students and graduate students continue to rise. The success of students from diverse backgrounds must also be assured. In previous years, student activism focused on issues of social justice, war, and political and economic problems. However, today's student activism relates closely to these trends seen in the literature, diversity and integrity. Researchers of students and student development need to keep attuned to these emerging issues. (Contains 25 references.) (EMS)

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ERIC TRENDS 1999-2000:

STUDENTS

by Adrianna J. Kezar

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What are ERIC Trends?

Educational Research Information Center (ERIC) Trends are analyses of higher education literature contained in the ERIC Database. These analyses describe major concerns in institutional practice, helping researchers identify new areas for research, areas where further understanding is needed, and any gaps in the literature. For practitioners, ERIC Trends place individual institutional shifts in practice into a larger context. They provide individual institutions with examples of other institutions that are trying to make the same changes and help institutions identify other areas they should consider for change.

Slightly more than half of the literature summarized in ERIC Trends is drawn from higher education journals. The remainder of the literature summarized includes conference papers and documents published by educational associations, institutional research offices, research centers, consortia, and state and federal associations and boards. The literature is produced by both the research and practice communities. It is a combination of current theory and research, such as conference papers and Internet documents, and more dated literature, such as books and journal articles, which take several years to evolve from acceptance to publication. A limitation of this analysis is that it relies on the literature ERIC is able to obtain from authors and organizations; some groups may be unwilling to share information and, therefore, are not represented in the analysis. The range of documents analyzed in the ERIC Trends is fairly comprehensive, however.

To retrieve the literature for analysis, all of the higher education literature in the ERIC database was searched by the ERIC descriptors that reflect the most important topics in higher education: college faculty; college students (including foreign students); finance; college instruction (including academic advising); curriculum; program evaluation; policy and governance; legal issues; professional development; college administration (including educational facilities); higher education and the public good; and professional and graduate education. A quantitative analysis compared the current number of documents within a particular category to earlier years (back to 1986). A qualitative analysis of content was conducted on ERIC abstracts to identify recurring themes.

Higher Education Trends (1999-2000): Students

by Adrianna J. Kezar

Student demographics/characteristics/profiles, retention, and funding for college were the three most prevalent issues in the literature about students. Profiles of students and examinations of graduates' lives help institutions to understand issues related to retention and outcomes (McCormick, A. C., Nunez, A., Shah, V., & Choy, S. P. A.). Studies of student generations and demographics provide needed evidence for institutions about the changing needs of students. However, it is unclear whether and to what degree institutions actually use this information. Models of usage are clearly needed. Few publications begin without a recounting of how student demographics are changing and how there is a need for institutions to respond to these changes; more examples of successful responses are also necessary.

Studies of retention continue to dominate the higher education literature. The *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice* is a new source of information focusing on retention issues. There are data related to retention for almost every student population, at any institutional type. There is clearly a need for meta-analysis of these individual retention studies to provide better guidance for institutional leaders. There also remains a concern about financing college. This is another area where over 30 studies are conducted each year, but little meta-analysis conducted (Bateman, M., & Kennedy, E.). Perhaps issues surrounding funding a college education change too swiftly to cumulate our knowledge. Yet, it is unclear what the new stream of reports each year helps us to understand.

The amount of research on students declined from previous years. The research that was conducted tended to follow traditional themes (such as retention, student adjustment, student satisfaction, student development, student access & recruitment -- described in the ERIC Trends in Governance and Policy, diversity issues, disciplinary issues, academic advising), rather than examining new issues such as technology, transfer students, multiple enrollment, student success, or student outcomes. However, a few new themes emerged including:

1. Ethics and integrity
2. Alcohol use
3. Adult student and graduate student needs
4. Diversity and student success
5. Student activism.

The Search for Ethics & Integrity

In the last ERIC Trends on Students (1996-1998), student discipline was one of the main themes. Perhaps the emphasis on integrity is a response to the problems of cheating, alcoholism, abuse in college athletics, and other unethical behavior. The literature described ways to create a culture of integrity. Integrity was not only a theme among students, but for administrators and faculty as well. It appears that society is in a reflective time (or perhaps a troubled time), seeking out new solutions to age-old questions about human behavior. Enrollments at evangelical and other Christian colleges have risen in the last decade, outpacing that of secular institutions and of

religious groups on non-religiously affiliated campuses. The students want to avoid lifestyles found at many secular colleges and universities (Reisberg, L.). We need to better understand the impact of abusive behavior on the overall college community. Researchers also might want to examine what religiously based colleges do to create an environment of integrity and how that impacts student satisfaction and development.

One positive response has been the emergence of honor codes. Survey data from 4,285 students in 31 colleges and universities indicated that students at schools with academic honor codes view the issue of academic integrity in a fundamentally different way than students at non-honor code institutions. This difference seems to stem from the presence of an honor code and its influence on the way students think about academic honesty/dishonesty (McCabe, D., Trevino, L. K., & Butterfield, K. D.).

Institutions and College leaders are supporting their students' search for integrity by "cracking down" on illegal and destructive behavior. Fraternities' and sororities' values and cultures are being examined; strategies for modifying the behavior within these groups are being shared. One article encouraged trustees and presidents to collect data on how Greek life affects education. It also provided advice for administrators such as rewarding appropriate behavior, punishing destructive behavior, encouraging student organization self-governance, and promoting systematic communication with student organizations (Dungy, G. J.).

Alcohol & Drugs

Although alcohol has been a recurrent theme among undergraduate students, the latter part of the 1990s revealed a renewed interest in understanding the issue of drinking on college campuses. This interest seems to be cyclical; there was also strong interest in developing alcohol education programs in the late 1980s. A recent study on binge drinking by Harvard University is responsible for much of the renewed interest. The study showed that a high proportion of students are binge drinkers, and that students perceive that their peers drink more than they actually report. These new findings about how students misperceive their peers' levels of drinking can lead to many helpful programs about alcohol consumption, and help eradicate myths.

One journal examined the issues, background, current situation, and outlook surrounding alcohol abuse and drinking on campus, noting that alcohol-related deaths at several schools have prompted many administrators to take tough stands on student drinking (Scrivo, K. L.). Many guides offered suggestions on how colleges and community groups can work together to reduce problems produced by binge drinking among college students, noting especially the importance of curtailing the supply of cheap alcohol in large volume that is often available to college students (Erenberg, D. F., & Hacker, G. A.). Although alcohol was the most common theme, drug usage studies among college students were also prevalent. Alcohol and drug research needs to be synthesized and best practices disseminated more broadly.

The Changing Needs of Students

The growth of adult students and the rise of lifelong learning have resulted in a major rethinking of student needs. Many higher educators are considering what this change in the student body means for student services. New technology providers can be models and leaders for higher education institutions in the development of student services for adult and continuing students (Trow, M.).

One paper examined what is known (and not known) about adult college students. It reported on a study that compared different age groups in different types of institutions, reviewed the research about how adults learn, and discussed methodologies for teaching adults. The article reviewed adult learning theories and suggested that educators of adults who are interested in improving teaching use a cycle involving questioning, theorizing, testing, and reflection. Other writers discussed such concerns as whether the literature adequately addresses the concerns of adult educators, one of which is how services and teaching can be improved for this population. One paper concluded that there continues to be a need for research about adult student learning and that college programs need to recognize how older students differ from traditional students (Barker, T. S., Sturdivant, V. A., & Smith, H. W., Jr.). Much more research is necessary, particularly on the needs of adult students and on the lifelong learning process itself, the changing demands for lifelong learning, the reasons for different national policies and practices, and policy impacts on participation (Teichler, U.). The issue of lifelong learning, certification, and enhancing our understanding of adult student needs was also a theme in the ERIC Trends in International Higher Education.

Changes in Graduate Education

Graduate education is receiving more attention than in previous years due to the activities of organizations such as the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students. This group asserts that support services for graduate students, the majority of whom are adults, are missing from most campuses which are still primarily oriented toward undergraduate students. This association has passed resolutions calling for reforms intended to improve the lives of graduate students; changes they are proposing include increasing health care and making faculty and institutions accountable for better advising. Although the association is not dominated by union activists, the issue of collective bargaining for graduate student assistants is a significant one (Leatherman, C.). More research on graduate student services is clearly needed: What services are institutions offering? Which are the most effective? What are model practices?

Diversity and Student Success

Assuring the success of students from diverse backgrounds was one of the most prevalent themes across the literature in higher education. Even though research about best practices abounds, there is a perception that campuses are not doing enough to create an inclusive and successful environment (Schwitzer, A. M., Ancis, J. R., & Griffin, O. T.). The range of studies is impressive. Many examine the experience of students of color at predominantly white institutions; some detail coping mechanisms and survival strategies of students of color; others discuss strategies for assisting women in underrepresented fields; still others examine the climate for Gay and Lesbian students. The following examples will illustrate the depth of the literature. Studies illustrated that minorities at predominantly white schools spend much of their energy

fighting race-based stereotypes and demanding to be identified, recognized, and respected both for their race and their gender (Jackson, L. R.). Another study demonstrated that in response to the hostile campus environment, students of color reported four survival strategies--maintaining cultural coherence, practicing dream internalization and maintenance, developing circumscribed knowledge, and engaging in program migration. Findings also suggested that the cultural context of research institutions supports a dual mechanism of isolation in which high levels of compartmentalization and specialization support avoidance of interaction by faculty and staff (Crim, E. J., Jr.).

There is also more research on Asian students, students with disabilities, and gay and lesbian students, topics on which there was previously very little research. There has been an expansion in issues addressed under the umbrella of diversity. For example, studies of the Asian Pacific American (APA) college students identified three problems that may have important implications for teaching and learning: communication with and within the population; refugee waves; and generational identity. Educators should consider alternative and more appropriate strategies to avoid neglecting segments of this diverse population. This article included strategies to avoid these problems (Story, N.O.).

Student Activism

In previous years, student activism focused on issues of social justice, war, and political and economic problems. Today's student activism relates closely to the trends in the literature described here: diversity and integrity. One book examined student activism in the 1990s and found its sources in the struggle over multiculturalism and issues of social justice and equality. It argued that identity politics is a reaction to the cultural hegemony reinforced through longstanding monocultural norms of the academy (Rhoads, R. A.). Students, for the most part, are uninvolved in the struggles and dialogues on campus related to the changing curriculum or pedagogy, the impact of capitalism and the market, the need for internationalization, or tenure. With the exception of a small group of students involved in teaching assistant unionization (see the faculty trends) or meeting and needs of graduate students, the student voice on campus is mostly muted.

Conclusion

It is quite surprising to discover that there is little, if any, research on technology related to students. Given the amount of time many college students spend on the computer, there is a growing concern about Internet addiction, antisocial behavior, and lowering of interpersonal and other intelligence. A few studies examined differences between on-line students and on-campus students in terms of learning and experience (MacFarland, T. W.). This seems an important area for future research. Also, many students are enrolling at more than one institution at a time; we know little about this population and the impact of dual enrollment. A few studies examined student success models, but more study is needed (Ammerman, P. A., McLaughlin, G. W., & Brozovsky, P. V.) There is a growing body of literature on learning communities as a successful model for developing student success (Levine, J.). In addition, over the last decade there has been research on the first year experience. These are detailed in the ERIC Trends in Teaching and Learning. Researchers of students and student development need to keep attuned to

emerging issues and synthesize the enormous literature base on retention, adjustment, diversity and other well studied issues.

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